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Report of the Secretary-General on Côte d'Ivoire

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 1464 (2003) of 4 February 2003, in which the Council requested me to submit recommendations on how the United Nations could support fully the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, in accordance with the request by the round table of Ivorian political forces and by the conference of heads of State on Côte d'Ivoire. It may be recalled that, during my briefing to the Security Council on 28 January 2003, I indicated my intention to send a multidisciplinary technical assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire to obtain the necessary information on the ground. The present report traces the origins and evolution of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire and presents the findings of the assessment mission, as well as my recommendations on the role the United Nations could play to facilitate the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

II. Root causes of instability in Côte d'Ivoire

2. For over three decades after it attained independence in 1960, Côte d'Ivoire enjoyed political stability and relative socio-economic prosperity under its founding leader, President Félix Houphouët-Boigny. As a result, the country attracted large numbers of foreign workers, mostly from neighbouring countries, as well as investors. Following the death of President Houphouët-Boigny on 7 December 1993, Côte d'Ivoire was plunged into a protracted power struggle, which generated intense political instability and culminated in December 1999 in a coup d'état, led by General Robert Guei, who overthrew President Henri Konan Bédié.

3. The post-Houphouët-Boigny power struggle was exacerbated by the controversies over nationality laws and eligibility conditions for national elections, particularly the presidential elections, which resulted in the disqualification of some prominent political leaders, including Alassane Ouattara of the Rally of the Republicans (RDR). These issues came to a head during the presidential elections of October 2000.

4. The heated dispute over the results of those presidential elections resulted in violent clashes between the partisans of the two main contenders — General Guei and Laurent Gbagbo. Subsequently, the Supreme Court declared Mr. Gbagbo the winner of those elections. Those clashes claimed the lives of over 50 people,

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however, and a mass grave was subsequently discovered near the northern Abidjan suburb of Yopougon.

5. Despite an alleged coup attempt in January 2001, which was blamed on foreigners and resulted in large numbers of immigrant workers from Burkina Faso leaving Côte d'Ivoire, scheduled municipal elections were held in March 2001. The municipal elections marked an important turning point for Côte d'Ivoire, as all political parties were allowed to field candidates for the elections. Mr. Ouattara's RDR party won in the largest number of communes. Following those elections, President Gbagbo pursued a policy of national reconciliation and sought to decentralize State authority by organizing provincial elections.

6. In October 2001, the President organized a forum for national reconciliation to address the issues that had polarized the Ivorian people, including the questions of nationality, land ownership, the disputed legitimacy of his government and the conditions of service of the security forces. The forum culminated in a summit meeting attended by President Gbagbo, Mr. Bédié, General Guei and Mr. Ouattara on 22 and 23 January 2002 to settle their differences and consider the recommendations of the forum. The four leaders subsequently issued a final communiqué in which, among other things, they agreed to oppose undemocratic avenues to power, and to professionalize the security forces and improve their conditions of service. They further agreed to create a broad-based national electoral commission and a national body to address the question of land ownership.

7. The leaders also addressed the issue of the legitimacy of the current government and agreed to form a new government of national unity. In July 2002, President Gbagbo held a further meeting with Mr. Ouattara and Mr. Bédié in Yamoussoukro, which led to the formation of a broad-based government on 5 August 2002. All of Côte d'Ivoire's main opposition political parties were included in the new cabinet, 20 portfolios being allocated to the ruling Ivorian Popular Front (FPI) and 4 to Mr. Ouattara's RDR, while 7 went to Mr. Bédié's former ruling Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI), 2 to the Ivorian Workers Party (PIT) of Francis Wodié and 1 to General Guei's Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire (UDPCI). The long-standing controversy over Mr. Ouattara's nationality, which had become a major source of political tension and instability, was also finally resolved when a court delivered a nationality certificate to him on 26 July 2002. Unfortunately, not all of the recommendations of the forum for national reconciliation were implemented.

III. Current crisis

8. Regrettably, these encouraging steps towards national reconciliation and reducing tensions in Côte d'Ivoire were disrupted by the current crisis, which erupted on 19 September 2002. The crisis started with simultaneous attacks on military installations in the capital, Abidjan, and the second largest city, Bouaké, and in the northern town of Korhogo by some 800 soldiers, ostensibly to protest against their planned demobilization early in 2003. Most of those soldiers had been recruited during the military regime of General Guei.

9. While loyalist security forces quickly regained control of the situation in Abidjan, the rebels retained control of Bouaké and Korhogo and subsequently seized other towns in the northern and western regions of the country, as other disgruntled

soldiers and civilians swelled their ranks. General Guei, together with several members of his family, as well as the Minister of the Interior, Emile Boga Doudou, were among the people killed during the incidents in Abidjan. Although the initial attacks were widely believed to be a mutiny, there were also allegations that the rebellion was an attempted coup d'état supported by foreign elements, which prompted widespread harassment of foreigners, including migrant workers from neighbouring countries, as well as refugees from Liberia and Sierra Leone, whose dwellings in shanty towns in Abidjan and San-Pédro were burned down by the security forces. In Abidjan, the destruction of squatter settlements displaced some 20,000 people.

10. Loyalist security forces launched several military operations to dislodge the rebel soldiers from the seized towns, without success. By the end of September, the rebel forces had consolidated their hold on the northern half of the country and were operating under the umbrella of a political movement calling itself the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI). Through its spokesman, Guillaume Soro, a former student leader, the movement identified its key demands as the resignation of President Gbagbo, the holding of inclusive national elections, a review of the Constitution and an end to the domination of southerners in the affairs of the country. The conflict was further compounded by the emergence of two new armed groups, the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West (MPIGO) and the Movement for Justice and Peace (MJP), who seized the towns of Danané and Man in November 2002. Both groups declared that their main objective was to avenge the death of General Guei and they also demanded the resignation of President Gbagbo.

11. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) took swift steps to search for a solution to the crisis. On 29 September the subregional organization convened an emergency summit meeting in Accra, which set up a contact group comprising Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria and Togo, together with the African Union, to promote dialogue between the rebels and the Government of Côte d'Ivoire, and to discuss a general framework to resolve the crisis. The summit was followed by a meeting of the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission, which recommended that immediate arrangements be put in place to deploy ECOWAS troops to Côte d'Ivoire. The approved mandate of the ECOWAS force included monitoring a proposed ceasefire, ensuring the disengagement of the insurgents from the areas that had fallen under their control, and disarming the rebel groups.

12. The ECOWAS Contact Group on Côte d'Ivoire began its mediation efforts on 30 September 2002 with a meeting with President Gbagbo in Abidjan. On 3 October, members of the Group, accompanied by the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, and the Interim Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, Amara Essy, met with the leaders of MPCI in Bouaké. The mediation efforts continued until 6 October when the Contact Group left the country after the Government thrice postponed signing a ceasefire agreement, on the grounds that the agreement would result in legitimizing the rebel movement and partitioning the country. On 11 October, Cheikh Tidiane Gadio, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Senegal, which was then holding the chairmanship of ECOWAS, renewed the efforts to broker a ceasefire. The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, together with my Special Representative for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, participated in Foreign Minister Gadio's talks with President Gbagbo in Abidjan and with MPCI in Bouaké. These efforts culminated in the signing by MPCI on 17

October 2002 of a ceasefire agreement, which was subsequently accepted by President Gbagbo in an address to the nation on the same day.

13. In accepting the cessation of hostilities, President Gbagbo announced that he had requested France to assign forces to monitor the ceasefire, pending the deployment of ECOWAS troops. As indicated in the letter dated 21 February 2003 from the Permanent Representative of France to the President of the Security Council, the forces of Operation Licorne were already based in Côte d'Ivoire under long-standing bilateral defence arrangements.

IV. The Lomé talks

14. The ceasefire agreement of 17 October paved the way for negotiations on a political agreement between the Government and MPCI. The peace talks between the two sides began in Lomé on 24 October 2002 under the auspices of the President of Togo, Gnassingbé Eyadéma, who had been designated by the ECOWAS Contact Group to lead the negotiations. On 31 October, the Lomé talks yielded the first agreement, under which the two parties reaffirmed their commitment to the ceasefire agreement, pledged to refrain from human rights abuses, and acknowledged the need to preserve the territorial integrity of Côte d'Ivoire and to respect the country's institutions. A further agreement was signed on 1 November, under which the Government, among other things, agreed to submit to the National Assembly a draft amnesty law, which would include freeing jailed members of the military and permitting the return of exiled soldiers, who would be reintegrated into the army. The Lomé talks subsequently stalled, however, as MPCI insisted on the resignation of President Gbagbo, a review of the Constitution and the holding of fresh elections, while the Government demanded that the rebels disarm and honour their commitment to preserve the territorial integrity of the country.

15. Despite intensive efforts by the ECOWAS leaders to break the stalemate, including the submission of a compromise draft peace plan by President Eyadéma on 21 November 2002, and a series of meetings among the ECOWAS leaders in Kara, Togo, as well as in Abidjan and Dakar on 16 and 18 December 2002, the two sides would not return to the Lomé talks. At their meeting in Dakar on 18 December, the ECOWAS leaders decided that the ECOWAS Peace Force for Côte d'Ivoire (ECOFORCE) would be deployed by 31 December 2002. They also appointed General Papa Khalil Fall (Senegal) as the Force Commander of ECOFORCE and Raph Uwechue (Nigeria), as the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS for Côte d'Ivoire. The leaders appealed to the African Union and the United Nations to step up their involvement in assisting ECOWAS to resolve the Ivorian crisis. They also requested the Chairman of ECOWAS, as well as France and the African members of the Security Council, to bring the issue of Côte d'Ivoire before the Council.

16. In a fresh initiative, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Dominique de Villepin, visited Côte d'Ivoire on 3 and 4 January 2003 for consultations with the Government, political parties and the rebel movements, during which he secured the agreement of all Ivorian political groups to attend a round-table meeting in France. At the same time, the ECOWAS peace efforts yielded complementary progress when President Eyadéma brokered an agreement on cessation of hostilities between the

Government and the two western-based rebel movements, MPIGO and MJP, who had not been part of the ceasefire agreement of 17 October 2002.

V. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement

17. As indicated during my briefing to the Security Council on 28 January 2003, the round-table meeting of the Ivorian political groups was held at Linas-Marcoussis, France, from 15 to 23 January 2003 with the participation of the Ivorian Popular Front, the Movement of Future Forces (MFA), the Movement for Justice and Peace, the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire, the Ivorian Popular Movement of the Great West, the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire-African Democratic Party (PDCI-RDA), the Ivorian Workers Party, the Rally of the Republicans, the Democratic Union of Côte d'Ivoire (UDCI) and the Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire. The round table was chaired by the Chairman of the French Constitutional Commission, Pierre Mazeaud, assisted by Judge Keba Mbaye (Senegal) and the former Prime Minister of Côte d'Ivoire, Seydou Diarra, as well as representatives from the African Union and ECOWAS and my Special Representative for West Africa as facilitators.

18. The round table resulted in the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement (S/2003/99, annex I) on 23 January 2003 by all Ivorian political forces. It may be recalled that the principal provisions of the Agreement include the creation of a government of national reconciliation, to be headed by a Prime Minister appointed by the President in consultation with other political parties. The President would delegate substantial powers to the Prime Minister, whose mandate would last until the next national elections, which are scheduled for 2005. The Prime Minister would not be eligible to stand as a candidate in those elections.

19. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement also defined the main tasks of the new government of national reconciliation, which include preparing a timetable for credible and transparent national elections, restructuring the defence and security forces, and organizing the regrouping and disarmament of all armed groups. An annex to the Agreement also set out a programme for resolving issues that constituted the root causes of instability in Côte d'Ivoire, such as the question of citizenship, the status of foreign nationals, eligibility to run for the presidency of the country, incitement to hatred and xenophobia by certain media, the creation of a human rights commission consisting of representatives from all parties, the drawing up of a voters roll, the independence of the justice system with respect to electoral disputes, and the implementation of a land tenure regime.

20. The peace Agreement provided for the establishment of a committee to follow up on the implementation of the Agreement (the Follow-Up Committee). The Committee will be based in Abidjan. It is composed of representatives of the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, the European Commission, the International Organization of la Francophonie, the Bretton Woods institutions, the Group of Eight countries, the European Union, a military representative of the troop-contributing countries and France. A meeting of the heads of State of concerned African countries and France, which was held in Paris on 25 and 26 January 2003, endorsed the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. During that meeting, President Gbagbo, in consultation with other Ivorian parties, appointed the former Prime Minister, Seydou Diarra, to head the new government of national reconciliation. In addition, during

consultations conducted on the sidelines of the meeting, an understanding was reached on an arrangement for the distribution of cabinet posts among the Ivorian parties, under which the key portfolios of defence and the interior were allocated to the rebel movements.

21. Both the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and the conclusions adopted by the heads of State in Paris on 26 January 2003 (S/2003/99, annex II) envisaged a United Nations role in the implementation of the Agreement, including participating in and chairing the Follow-Up Committee. The Agreement stipulated that the new Ivorian government of national reconciliation would seek assistance from ECOWAS, France and the United Nations in guaranteeing the reform and restructuring of the defence and security forces; international development partners are requested to cooperate with the new government in putting in place a programme for the reintegration of all armed elements. In their communiqué, the heads of State proposed the strengthening of the presence of the United Nations system in Côte d'Ivoire, in particular in the areas of security, humanitarian assistance and human rights, as well as the deployment of civilian and military observers, who would help to supervise the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. They also expressed the wish that the Security Council would endorse the peacekeeping operation launched by ECOWAS and France, and authorize that operation to take the necessary measures to ensure the freedom of movement and security of its personnel, and to guarantee the protection of civilians facing the imminent threat of violence.

VI. Developments since the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement

22. The implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement encountered serious obstacles soon after the conclusion of the Paris summit. The newly appointed Prime Minister of the envisaged government of national reconciliation, Seydou Diarra, was unable to travel immediately to Côte d'Ivoire to take up his post as head of the new government, because of a series of massive and often violent demonstrations that erupted in Abidjan and other towns to protest against the allocation of the Ministries of Defence and the Interior to the rebel movements. During those demonstrations, French interests and installations in Abidjan were targeted and deliberately attacked.

23. In addition to the demonstrations, the leaders of Côte d'Ivoire's defence forces wrote to President Gbagbo expressing their opposition to the participation of the rebel movements in the new government. The leaders of major political parties who signed the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement also rejected the allocation of the defence and interior portfolios to the rebel movements, while the incumbent Minister of the Interior asserted that the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was "null and void". The situation was compounded by the apparently ambivalent position of President Gbagbo who, on his return from Paris, referred to the Agreement as "proposals".

24. In an address to the nation on 7 February 2003, President Gbagbo confirmed the appointment of Mr. Diarra as the new Prime Minister and requested him to propose a new cabinet. At the same time, the President asserted that he intended to retain all his constitutional prerogatives, and that he would not implement those provisions of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement he considered to be at variance with the Constitution of Côte d'Ivoire. In particular, he took exception to the provision making the appointment of the Prime Minister irrevocable, and to the proposed

disarmament of the national armed forces. The President also rejected the allocation of the Defence and Interior Ministries to the rebel movements.

25. Despite the mixed signals emanating from the President, his address to the nation had the positive effect of calming the situation, as the street demonstrations in Abidjan ceased. In other encouraging developments, the leaders of the defence and security forces announced that they were no longer opposed to the participation of the rebel movements in a new government, provided the rebels renounced their claim to the key portfolios of defence and the interior. Seven political parties signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement also publicly expressed their support for the allocation of some posts in the new government of national reconciliation to the rebel movements. For their part, the three rebel movements and Mr. Ouattara's RDR party denounced what they perceived as President Gbagbo's departures from the Agreement.

26. Efforts by the ECOWAS Contact Group on Côte d'Ivoire to break the impasse on the implementation of the Agreement culminated in a summit meeting attended by President Eyadéma, together with the President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor, and the President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, as well as the Interim Chairman of the Commission of the African Union, Amara Essy, and the Vice-President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, with President Gbagbo in Yamoussoukro on 10 February 2003. Mr. Diarra travelled to Yamoussoukro with the ECOWAS heads of State and was installed as Prime Minister on that occasion. The meeting explored alternative arrangements for the allocation of posts in the new government of national unity that could be acceptable to all parties. The rebel movements refused to attend, however, on the grounds that they did not wish to renegotiate the understandings already reached in Paris.

27. Following his installation, Prime Minister Diarra held extensive consultations on the composition of the government of national reconciliation with all concerned Ivorian parties, as well as the President of Ghana, the current Chairman of ECOWAS, and with other leaders of the region. However, the consultations were inconclusive, as the rebels continued to insist on having the defence and interior portfolios. In addition, President Gbagbo appeared reluctant to delegate the necessary authority to the Prime Minister, as required under the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, and insisted that he would have the final say on the composition of the new government. Mr. Diarra presented a provisional cabinet list on two occasions, but President Gbagbo drew up a different list. Consequently, following a meeting with the rebel movements in Bouaké on 3 March 2003, during which the movements refused to compromise on the sticking point of the defence and interior posts, the Prime Minister warned that he would consider resigning if his efforts to form the new government continued to encounter obstacles.

28. Some progress towards breaking the stalemate was finally made at a meeting of the 10 signatories to the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, which was convened in Accra from 6 to 8 March 2003 by President Kufuor as the current Chairman of ECOWAS. At that meeting the parties agreed to create a 15-member National Security Council comprising representatives of each of the 10 signatories, as well as the army, the gendarmerie, the police, President Gbagbo and Prime Minister Diarra, to oversee the functioning of the disputed posts of defence and the interior. They also requested the Prime Minister to submit candidates for the two ministries, who would be appointed by consensus, and they reached a new understanding on the

allocation of the other cabinet posts. Subsequently, on 10 March, President Gbagbo issued a decree delegating authority to the Prime Minister to implement the work programme set out in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, but only for a six-month period. In another positive development, which could contribute towards building confidence among the warring parties, on 11 March representatives of the rebel movements travelled to the Government-held city of Yamoussoukro and met with President Gbagbo for further talks on the formation of the new government. Efforts were also made to convene the new government at Yamoussoukro, on 13 March, but the Cabinet members nominated by the three rebel movements and Mr. Ouattara's RDR party refused to attend, citing security reasons.

VII. Technical assessment mission

29. The multidisciplinary technical assessment mission, which was headed by the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hédi Annabi, visited Côte d'Ivoire from 24 February to 7 March 2003. Representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Political Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Department of Public Information, the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) participated in the mission. While in Côte d'Ivoire, the mission held meetings in Abidjan with my Special Representative, Albert Tevoedjre, the United Nations country team and the commanders of the French and ECOWAS forces, as well as President Gbagbo, Prime Minister Diarra, relevant government Ministers, chiefs of the Ivorian defence and security forces, representatives of political parties, local and international non-governmental organizations, representatives of civil society and members of the diplomatic corps. The Assistant Secretary-General had the opportunity to participate in two meetings of the Follow-Up Committee on the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, one of which heard a briefing from Prime Minister Diarra on his efforts to form a new government of national reconciliation.

30. The assessment mission undertook visits to the field, including to some of the deployment positions of the French and ECOWAS forces at Daloa, Zuénoula, Yamoussoukro, Zambakro, Tiebissou and Bondoukou. The Senegalese, Togolese and Ghanaian contingents were preparing to take over the positions currently occupied by the French forces along the ceasefire line. The mission also held meetings with MPCI, MJP and MPIGO at MPCI headquarters in Bouaké on 4 March 2003. MJP and MPIGO, whose headquarters are respectively at Man and Danané in the west, agreed to travel to Bouaké for the meeting. My Special Representative chaired the meeting, which was also attended by the Special Representative of the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Raph Uwechue, and the Special Representative of the International Organization of la Francophonie, Lansana Kouyaté. That meeting secured the agreement of the rebel movements to attend the meeting in Accra on 6 March. In Abidjan, the mission also visited a shanty town and a camp for Liberian refugees. Part of the assessment team visited Guiglo, Duékoué and Guessabo on 5 March to assess the military, human rights and humanitarian situation in the western part of the country, while the Assistant Secretary-General and some members of the team travelled to Paris, where they held separate meetings with Mr. Bédié, as well as

representatives of Mr. Ouattara's RDR party and officials of the French Foreign Ministry.

VIII. Findings of the mission

31. In its meetings with the various interlocutors, the mission sought their assessment of the situation on the ground, including the prospects for the successful implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and the role that the United Nations could play in supporting its implementation. In the visits to the field and in discussions with the French and ECOWAS forces, the mission sought to conduct an assessment of their peacekeeping operations and the prevailing security conditions. The findings of the mission are as follows:

Political aspects

32. At the time the assessment mission arrived in Côte d'Ivoire, intensive consultations to resolve the stalemate over the formation of the government of national reconciliation were under way. Several stakeholders expressed the view that the understandings reached at the Paris summit concerning the power-sharing arrangement that allocated key cabinet posts to the rebel movements were primarily responsible for the impasse. In this regard, it was widely felt that these understandings, which are commonly known in Côte d'Ivoire as the "Kléber" arrangements, should be separated from the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, to which all parties must remain committed, as it provides a sound and viable basis for a peaceful solution to the current crisis. In order to break the deadlock, many interlocutors suggested that all parties, in particular RDR and the rebel movements, should be encouraged to consider an alternative power-sharing arrangement. President Gbagbo's apparent reluctance to delegate to Prime Minister Diarra the necessary authority to implement the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was also identified as another major obstacle in the consultations on the formation of the new government.

33. The delay in the formation of the new government had caused concern, particularly because the implementation of all other aspects of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement hinges on the installation of the government. As already indicated, the Agreement sets out a work programme to be implemented by the Government, including arrangements for the disarmament of all armed forces, the restructuring of the defence and security forces and preparations for the elections in 2005. There was concern that a prolonged stalemate might lead to renewed hostilities and entrench the current de facto partition of the country. During the meeting with the assessment mission on 4 March 2003, the rebel movements warned that, if the deadlock continued, they would consider organizing elections in the northern half of the country under their control. In addition, given the uncertain status of the incumbent government Ministers and their unclear relationship with the new Prime Minister, it was feared that the stalemate would further undermine the effective functioning of government departments.

34. Many stakeholders expressed the view that, when the new government of national reconciliation was finally installed, one of the most immediate challenges would be to provide security for the Prime Minister and his cabinet. The Prime Minister had already expressed concern about this crucial issue, which had also

preoccupied the Follow-Up Committee and the ECOWAS and French forces. It was suggested that the new government should perhaps meet, at least temporarily, in Yamoussoukro, the country's administrative capital, which is considered to be more secure than Abidjan. In addition, at its meeting held in Accra on 5 March, the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission recommended an increase in the troop strength of ECOFORCE, which would include 300 security personnel to assist with the protection of the new government. Given the delicate nature of this task, such an arrangement would require careful coordination with the national security forces.

35. It was widely recognized among all stakeholders of the Ivorian peace process that the ultimate challenge posed by the crisis lies in the 2005 elections. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement sets out the steps that must be taken, leading to those elections. A vital task for the new government of national reconciliation will be deciding how to tackle the issues relating to national identity, citizenship and the status of foreign nationals, which constitute the root cause of the long-standing controversies that have evolved into the current crisis. Considering that the solution to these issues will have implications for the crucial questions who is eligible to vote and to run for election to the presidency, sufficient time and complete transparency will be critical to ensuring a solution acceptable to all parties. In this connection, many stakeholders advised the assessment mission that preparations for the 2005 elections must begin as soon as possible and that the international community, in particular the United Nations, had a key role to play in ensuring that these complex and sensitive issues are addressed by the government of national reconciliation in a credible, balanced and transparent manner.

36. Although there was a sense of general satisfaction about the setting up of the Follow-Up Committee, several stakeholders were concerned that the seats of the African Union and ECOWAS had remained empty. Since then, the representatives of the two organizations have arrived in Abidjan and are now participating in the work of the Committee. In view of the amount of work that the Follow-Up Committee is expected to handle, it was suggested that there was a need for a small secretariat to support its activities.

Military aspects

37. The military situation in the country has been relatively stable since the ceasefire agreements between the Government and the three rebel movements came into effect. The majority of incidents reported to the assessment mission were more the result of independent action by local rebel commanders than part of any coordinated military action. The ceasefire remains precarious, however, and could easily unravel unless urgent steps are taken to underpin the cessation of hostilities with progress on a political settlement. The recent attacks by government forces on MPIGO positions in the area of Zuénoula on 21 February and at Binhouye on 2 March, using helicopter gunships, and the incidents at Bangolo on 7 and 8 March, underline the fragile state of the ceasefire.

38. The crisis in Côte d'Ivoire has assumed worrisome regional dimensions. Such is the extent and complexity of this aspect of the crisis that some of the interlocutors of the assessment mission characterized the situation in the western region of Côte d'Ivoire as part of the conflicts in the Mano River Union subregion. Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire have traded accusations about cross-border attacks launched by armed elements from the other's territory, the latest of which occurred on 3 March 2003,

during which the Defence Minister of Liberia alleged that the Liberian rebel movement Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) was operating from Ivorian territory. Information received by the mission indicated that, apart from the MPIGO and MJP rebel movements operating in those areas, there are also rogue armed groups, consisting mainly of Liberian elements and some former Sierra Leonean combatants, who are challenging the authority of both the government forces and the rebel movements. In addition, both the rebel movements and the government forces are reported to have recruited Liberian nationals, including some from the refugee camps in this area, to fight on their side. In particular, the camp at Nicla, near Guiglo, was identified as the main source of recruitment by government forces.

Force deployments

French forces

39. From its visits to the field and from discussions with various interlocutors, the assessment mission confirmed that the role played by the French forces has been fundamental to maintaining the ceasefire. Currently numbering approximately 3,900, the French forces have their headquarters in Abidjan and four regional headquarters at Daloa, Yamoussoukro, San-Pédro and Bondoukou. Under the arrangements for the deployment of ECOFORCE, it is envisaged that the French forces will progressively hand over responsibility for most of the areas along the ceasefire line to ECOFORCE, the French troops pulling back to assume a supporting role in all areas, except in the west where they will maintain their current deployment. The French forces will also continue to provide a quick reaction capability in support of their own troops and ECOFORCE.

ECOFORCE

40. ECOFORCE is in the process of deploying a 1,300-strong task force with contingents from Benin, Ghana, the Niger, Senegal and Togo. The force is mandated to monitor the ceasefire through securing its areas of responsibility and gaining the confidence of the parties, in order to assist in creating the conditions for them to resolve the conflict. It also has the task of facilitating the free movement of the humanitarian agencies. However, the envisaged handover of responsibilities from the French forces to ECOFORCE is being delayed in some areas by logistical constraints, the most serious of which is the lack of a proper communications capability, which continues to limit full deployment.

41. In addition to deficiencies in communications equipment, there are significant shortfalls in vehicles, difficulties with vehicle maintenance, lack of ambulances and malaria prophylaxis, and resupply problems. The ECOFORCE Force Commander has expressed concern that these serious shortfalls may render the force ineffective if not resolved by the time existing funding runs out in mid-April 2003. Steps have been taken to address some of these issues, but in a number of cases pledges made by donors have yet to be honoured, or equipment that has been provided is unsuitable for the task at hand.

42. Many of the problems facing ECOWAS are symptomatic of the difficulties it faces in planning a complex peacekeeping mission, which stem, in turn, from the fact that the ECOWAS secretariat is not sufficiently structured to take on the level of

planning necessary to support this type of operation. After conducting a reconnaissance in November 2002, the ECOFORCE troops started to deploy in January 2003, but there is still no force logistic concept and the Force Commander has had to resort to crisis management to keep the force afloat. Inevitably this detracts from his ability to focus on operational issues and will continue to affect the activities of the ECOWAS contingents in their respective areas of responsibility. While the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Standby High-Readiness Brigade have provided short-term planning assistance, there needs to be a long-term solution if ECOWAS is to succeed. Failure to address the immediate issue of support and the broader issue of planning threatens to undermine the effectiveness of the operation when, in all other respects, it has the potential to succeed.

43. As indicated above, on 5 March the ECOWAS Defence and Security Commission recommended an increase in the size of ECOFORCE, from the current 1,264 troops to 3,411, including 300 security personnel to contribute to the protection of the new government. The proposed expansion, which will be conducted in phases, will obviously add to the already serious challenges in providing logistical support to the force. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties that ECOFORCE is facing, the assessment team found morale among its troops to be remarkably high and those contingents visited (Ghana, Senegal and Togo) were all well-motivated and doing the best job possible under the circumstances.

FANCI

44. Prior to the current crisis, the national army of Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) numbered approximately 5,000, but most of its personnel based in the north of the country opted to stay there when the rebels assumed control. However, the army has since enlisted some 3,000 youths recruited in Abidjan. In addition to FANCI personnel, it is believed that the Government is employing a number of foreign nationals in a training and advisory role and up to 800 Liberian elements in the border areas. Since the reverses of last September, FANCI has undergone extensive restructuring to adjust to the current areas under its control, recruit new personnel and acquire new weapons. The loss of up to 40 per cent of its small arms during the fighting in September 2002 was a serious blow, but it is believed that these have been replaced; more significant has been the purchase of four T-55 tanks and eight light armoured vehicles, as well as attempts to buy helicopter gunships in addition to the three currently held.

45. FANCI troops have generally observed the ceasefire and have established a good relationship with both French and ECOWAS forces in the areas of the ceasefire line. The use of helicopter gunships in response to perceived rebel activity is, however, a worrying development that has the potential to undermine the ceasefire.

MPCI

46. The initial strength of MPCI was estimated at some 800 combatants. The current strength of the group is believed to be in the region of 5,000. The Movement's strength is concentrated in the centre and east of the country, particularly in Bouaké. Its combatants are reported to include foreign elements, mostly from Burkina Faso, and some from Mali, and there have been reports that it is using child soldiers, albeit a relatively small number, most being used in supporting roles.

47. The current deployment of MPCI covers the northern and north-eastern part of the country, including the borders with Burkina Faso and Mali. The group's weapons are primarily small arms but include some heavy machine guns mounted on pickups, mortars and rocket launchers. Thus far, MPCI has observed the ceasefire, with the exception of a number of incidents, particularly along the ceasefire line, of uncontrolled activity. According to information received by the assessment mission, the incidents have occurred at the instigation of individual local commanders and have included killings, intimidation and extortion.

48. MPCI remains capable of further military action and, while it is not assessed to be planning to conduct coordinated military action in the near future, its reaction in the wake of a breakdown of the ongoing efforts to form the new government of national reconciliation is unpredictable and any attempt by government forces to pursue a military solution can be expected to provoke a reaction.

MPIGO and MJP

49. The other two rebel groups, MPIGO and MJP, were originally drawn from supporters of the late General Guei. MPIGO is concentrated in the west of the country, centred on Binhouye, and the MJP on Man. Both groups came on the scene almost simultaneously, and later than MPCI. The extent to which their activities are coordinated with MPCI remains unclear, although MPCI claims to speak on behalf of all three. Both groups reportedly have unreliable chains of command and have been responsible for ceasefire violations. As indicated earlier, the proximity of MPIGO and MJP to the Liberian border, and the support they allegedly receive from Liberian elements, has added a worrisome regional dimension to the Ivorian conflict.

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration

50. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement stipulates that, immediately after assuming office, the government of national reconciliation will undertake the process of simultaneous regrouping of the forces on the ground, under the supervision of ECOWAS and the French forces, and that in a second phase the government will set out the measures to be taken with respect to disarming and demobilizing those forces, also under ECOWAS and French force supervision. In addition the Agreement assigns the envisaged new government the task of demobilizing all recruits enlisted after the events of 19 September 2002, and ensuring the reintegration of military personnel under a programme of disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration supported by the international community. Information gathered by the assessment mission confirmed, however, that no real planning for that process has begun on the ground, principally because of the delay in the formation of the government of national reconciliation. In addition, the ECOWAS forces are only at the early stages of their deployment and will have to resolve their current logistical shortfalls before they can start addressing these issues. Nevertheless, some stakeholders, in particular UNDP and the World Bank, have indicated their willingness to provide support for the reintegration of disarmed combatants. Especially critical will be the provision of short-term recovery assistance by those stakeholders for communities and municipalities so that they can reintegrate former combatants and returning refugees and displaced persons in a sustainable manner.

Humanitarian aspects

51. On 24 December 2002, I designated the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Carolyn McAskie, as my Humanitarian Envoy for the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. She visited the region from 12 January to 12 February 2003. The humanitarian aspects of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, including their regional dimensions, are fully covered in her report. Nevertheless, it is necessary to highlight several points that emerged in the assessments provided to the technical mission. The humanitarian situation remains precarious, with significant and ongoing population displacements, widespread human rights abuses and growing vulnerability of communities because of the deterioration of the social and economic fabric of the country. Displaced populations, Liberian refugees, minority groups and shanty town residents are among the most vulnerable.

52. While the total number of displaced persons is still being calculated by aid agencies, preliminary estimates indicate that about 800,000 people have been internally displaced, while up to 400,000 have fled the country, including Ivorian citizens and foreign nationals. Internally displaced persons are the primary responsibility of national authorities. In this regard, the mission noted that the Government seemed willing to assume this responsibility. However, the Government has yet to establish a clear and coordinated humanitarian policy regarding assistance to internally displaced persons and overall delivery of humanitarian assistance. This makes it difficult for the humanitarian community to plan strategically.

53. A persisting concern is the situation of Liberian refugees in the country. As a result of the fighting and in the wake of growing hostility against Liberian nationals, many of them have been forced to abandon their homes for safer locations, and are now dependent on aid after years of leading self-sufficient lives. The UNHCR plan to relocate them to alternate sites identified by the Government in Grand Bereby and Bondoukou was rejected by local communities. UNHCR is particularly concerned that the image of Liberian refugees as a disruptive influence and a security threat is widely shared in the subregion, and requests to neighbouring countries to accept them have not yet yielded the desired results. It is therefore important for the international community to support efforts by UNHCR to find asylum for the Liberian refugees outside the subregion, and to relocate inside the country those who do not wish to be evacuated. It should also be noted that, as a result of the crisis, some 40,000 Ivorians had to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire needs to ensure respect for the civilian status of the refugee camp at Nicla near Guiglo, and put an end to the reported recruitment of mercenaries among Liberians in the camp and at transit centres in Abidjan.

54. Several stakeholders noted the continuing recruitment of child soldiers. United Nations agencies which undertook a mission to the western towns of Man, Danané and Zouan-Hounien in February reported the presence of armed minors at military checkpoints, many of them operating under the influence of drugs and alcohol. An assessment mission on child protection should be undertaken nationwide, security conditions permitting, in order to determine the number of those enrolled and assess the potential for demobilization and reintegration. A high-profile advocacy campaign aimed at discouraging the mobilization and use of children, including girls, should also be considered to support the efforts of UNICEF.

55. The issue of access to populations in need remains critical. It is important that all parties to the conflict grant a blanket authorization providing free access for all

humanitarian transport throughout the country. Overall, the lack of cooperation by the Government with United Nations agencies has become an issue since the outbreak of the conflict, as highlighted by several incidents, including the confiscation of 20 UNICEF vehicles by the national army and the destruction of a UNHCR ferry. It is, however, encouraging to note that President Gbagbo has offered to replace the UNICEF vehicles.

56. In the western part of the country, the issue of access is complicated by the proliferation of uncontrolled and undisciplined militia groups who are looting and terrorizing civilians. In the north, MPCI has given assurances that it will sign a humanitarian agreement guaranteeing the free and safe access of humanitarian workers. Should it be necessary, all parties should also give assurances for cross-border humanitarian interventions for targeted vulnerable groups. It is hoped, however, that these issues will be resolved once the new government is fully in place and begins extending its authority throughout the country.

57. Inadequate funding for the United Nations Flash Appeal launched at the onset of the crisis constitutes another hindrance to effective delivery of humanitarian assistance. Four months after it was launched, less than 20 per cent of total requirements had been made available by donors. The United Nations agencies are doing their best to respond under these constraints, but will require urgent support to do better. In particular, it is imperative that funding is increased to relevant humanitarian agencies, in order to ensure adequate support to populations on the move and other affected groups. This could be done in the context of contributions to the Consolidated Appeal. A new Appeal will be launched in April 2003.

Economic and social impact of the conflict

58. The conflict in Côte d'Ivoire has halted the economic growth registered in the country during the first three quarters of 2002. Of note are the negative consequences for the agricultural sector, the main pillar of Côte d'Ivoire's economy, as well as inflation that has recently soared, prices rising exponentially, in particular in the areas controlled by the rebel movements in northern and western Côte d'Ivoire. Cotton exports (mainly in the northern part of the country) are at a standstill, affecting the livelihoods of approximately 2.5 million people. However, the impact on cocoa exports, which represent 40 per cent of Côte d'Ivoire's total exports, was contained thanks to an increase in international market prices.

59. The crisis has also affected the economies of other countries in the West African subregion, where Côte d'Ivoire is the leading economy (40 per cent of GDP of the West African Economic and Monetary Union and 15 per cent of the GDP of the Economic Community of West African States). The hardest hit countries include Burkina Faso and Mali, which conduct 70 to 80 per cent of their regional external trade with or through Côte d'Ivoire. Transportation costs have increased significantly, further reducing the competitiveness of the economies of these countries. In addition, there is a significant loss of remittances to the countries of the subregion as a large number of migrant workers have been forced to return to their countries of origin.

Human rights issues

60. The situation relating to human rights issues in Côte d'Ivoire was covered in the report of the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights (S/2003/90, annex),

issued on 24 January 2003. The assessment mission received reports, along the lines of those covered in that report, concerning widespread abuses against civilians perpetrated by all armed groups. Since that report was issued there have been more violations of human rights, including the looting and destruction of private property during the violent demonstrations after the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, as well as a resurgence in violence against the media, in particular the attacks on the premises of *Le Jour* newspaper and Nostalgie private radio station, and the abduction and murder on 26 February of a well-known actor, Camara Yéréfé, allegedly by death squads in Abidjan. In addition, more than 60 villagers were reported to have been killed during an attack by Liberian mercenaries in Bangolo on 8 March.

61. Apart from a limited ICRC presence, there is little capacity on the ground to monitor and report on conditions regarding the protection of vulnerable populations. The assessment mission noted a common call for the establishment of a strong human rights and humanitarian monitoring presence on the ground. The human rights presence should be combined with a serious advocacy effort, on the part of the United Nations, for respect of human rights and international humanitarian law and, by extension, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, by all armed actors. In addition to human rights monitoring and reporting, the activities of all actors on the ground should be aimed at furthering the protection of vulnerable populations, including internally displaced persons and refugees.

Public information issues

62. After the events of 19 September 2002, many Ivorian media outlets began to use an increasingly rhetorical tone, including what have been widely regarded as xenophobic messages, political manipulation, unsubstantiated claims and incitement to violence against individuals and groups, especially of specific foreign origin. This situation eased somewhat following the signing of the ceasefire agreement on 17 October 2002 and under pressure from the international community, including through contacts with the parties by my Special Representative for West Africa in the context of ongoing negotiations. Nevertheless, the tenor of media reporting remains highly charged and pernicious, reflecting the unstable political situation and further damaging the social fabric of the country. The focus of media attacks has shifted to the rebels and to others perceived as unpatriotic, and more recently to political targets. Foreign media and Governments have also been subjected to strong criticism.

63. United Nations agencies in Côte d'Ivoire and representatives of the international community reacted swiftly, expressing their concern and helping mitigate the effects of the xenophobic messages and negative propaganda and move towards creating a climate favourable to the promotion of dialogue and reconciliation. As the crisis unfolded, a United Nations inter-agency working group elaborated a communications plan to establish closer ties with the Ivorian media and better communicate information of vital concern to the public, particularly on humanitarian matters. In addition, United Nations agencies supported local initiatives to promote, through the media, messages of reconciliation and harmony.

64. With regard to the interruption since September 2002 of local FM broadcasts of Africa No. 1, BBC, and Radio France Internationale, along with those of Radio Nostalgie, the relevant stipulation in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement was brought

to the attention of the authorities by my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire. As a result of these efforts, Radio Nostalgie resumed broadcasts on 18 February 2003, while Africa No. 1, BBC and RFI resumed their broadcasts on 28 February.

65. The apparent lack of accountability in the face of irresponsible reporting that characterizes the current situation points to the need to consider ways of enhancing the effectiveness of existing national media oversight bodies, both those within the governmental structure and those established by media practitioners themselves, while ensuring respect for freedom of expression. This would include the application of internationally accepted standards on ways to sanction incitement to violence, hatred and xenophobia. Currently, neither the governmental structures nor the structures set up by journalists have the means or resources to carry out their mandate in an effective manner.

Security of United Nations personnel

66. Pursuant to the recommendations of the United Nations Security Management Team on the ground, Security Phase Three (relocation of non-essential staff and dependants outside the country) came into force with effect from 17 October 2002. Subsequently, Security Phase Four (United Nations role limited to emergency programmes and humanitarian operations) was effected beginning on 5 February 2003, so that only 82 essential staff, mainly from humanitarian agencies, remained in the country. President Gbagbo informed the assessment mission that he was disappointed by the decision to invoke Security Phase Four on the heels of the signing of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. It should, however, be noted that the violent demonstrations in reaction to the "Kléber" power-sharing arrangements prompted the implementation of these security measures.

67. Under Security Phases Three and Four, the major challenge facing the Security Management Team has been to provide efficient security coverage for humanitarian agencies operating throughout the country, while maintaining a reliable communication system network in Abidjan to keep remaining staff members abreast of the security situation on the ground. The agreement reached with FANCI, the French forces and MPCI on a pragmatic framework of security clearances has somewhat facilitated humanitarian assessments and operations across the front lines, but the free movement of humanitarian personnel throughout the country is necessary for sustained action.

IX. Proposed role of the United Nations

68. My Special Representative, in cooperation with the Follow-Up Committee, is assisting in the efforts to move the peace process forward, while the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, OHCHR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), UNDP and the International Organization for Migration, as well as national and international non-governmental organizations are helping to address the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. Since the outbreak of the crisis, the United Nations agencies have had to make a drastic shift from purely development programmes to a rapid emergency response mode. The agencies are in the process of reinforcing their country teams with emergency personnel and have gradually begun

expanding programmes to reach vulnerable populations in the interior. Inter-agency assessments are being undertaken on a regular basis to obtain a clearer understanding of the humanitarian problems and priority needs. At the time of the assessment mission's visit, up to 300,000 affected people were benefiting from a range of emergency programmes aimed at alleviating their condition.

69. UNHCR is engaged in efforts to find a durable solution for Liberian and other refugees at risk in Côte d'Ivoire, as well as planning for the safe and sustainable return of Ivorian refugees who fled during the crisis, while WFP and FAO are closely monitoring the country's food security situation, with a view to averting a major food crisis. WFP has established field offices in the northern town of Korhogo, as well as in Bouaké, Yamoussoukro and the towns of Daloa, Bondoukou and Guiglo in the Government-controlled areas. UNICEF is undertaking activities to support education programmes for affected children and working with WHO to re-establish vaccination campaigns, which were suspended as a result of the fighting. WHO is also monitoring the health situation closely and, in December, its rapid intervention helped to contain an outbreak of cholera. UNDP is supporting the efforts to promote national reconciliation and social cohesion through civil society organizations, religious and community leaders. On 15 February, OHCHR deployed a Human Rights Officer to assist the United Nations country team in monitoring human rights issues.

70. The assessment mission explored a wide range of options for a possible enhanced United Nations role in supporting the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. Despite the continuing uncertainty regarding the prospects for the implementation of the Agreement, it is essential that prompt action be taken to give my Special Representative and the Follow-Up Committee the means to actively promote and support the peace process, on the basis of the needs of the new government and developments on the ground.

Military activities

71. In the military sphere, the options considered by the assessment mission included (a) establishing a military advisory team in the office of my Special Representative; (b) deploying a military liaison group which would be co-located with the field headquarters of the French and ECOWAS forces, as well as those of the government and rebel forces; (c) deploying military observers throughout the country, as envisaged at the Paris summit; and (d) launching a fully-fledged peacekeeping operation.

72. Given the prevailing security conditions, which require the robust interposition role currently played by the French forces, and taking into account the fact that the government of national reconciliation is only beginning to take shape, the assessment mission was of the opinion that, at this stage, the United Nations should consider playing a role that would complement the operations of the French and ECOWAS forces. It is recommended that, as an initial step, the Security Council consider approving option (b), which offers a course of action that is responsive to the emerging momentum in the political process and can provide the structure for an integrated approach in support of the implementation of the military aspects of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement.

73. The military liaison group that would be deployed under this option would comprise a headquarters and sufficient liaison teams assigned to all areas where the

various armed forces are principally based. It is envisaged that the liaison teams would be deployed to the major locations of each of the three rebel movements, as well as the main FANCI locations, and the French and ECOWAS forces. The teams would vary in size according to their location and depending on the parties with whom they are liaising. Each team would comprise a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 liaison officers, with a total strength of up to 76 military personnel, including the necessary headquarters staff.

74. Should the Security Council approve this proposal, an advance party of 26 military officers would be deployed as soon as the necessary security guarantees have been obtained, including guarantees of freedom of movement. In addition, the French and ECOWAS forces would have to provide a rapid reaction capability in support of the liaison officers, and coordination between the United Nations, French and ECOWAS military elements would be established prior to deployment. The general task of the advance party would be to establish contact with the armed groups to prepare for the deployment of the liaison group. The rest of the liaison group would be inducted progressively after the government of national reconciliation is fully established, and when security conditions permit.

75. The liaison group will provide advice to the Special Representative on military matters and monitor the military situation, including the security of Liberian refugees. The group will also establish liaison with the French and ECOWAS forces, as well as FANCI and the rebel groups, in order to build confidence and trust between the armed groups, which will be vital to ensuring that they understand and support the political process. The liaison group would include disarmament and demobilization experts who would provide the necessary contact between my Special Representative and the Government and the French and ECOWAS forces on disarmament and demobilization matters. The group would also provide input to the Secretariat for planning future steps as the situation develops. In doing so, it will help to identify future tasks, particularly those associated with disengagement and disarmament and demobilization, and the likely requirements for monitoring. The liaison group will also provide a limited observer function.

76. Options (c) and (d) would be reviewed as the situation develops and the basis of the new government's needs concerning the implementation of the Marcoussis work programme. Option (c) would build upon the work of the liaison group and could be considered once there is substantive progress towards the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement by all parties, as well as a continuation of the conditions and security guarantees referred to in paragraph 74 above.

77. Another important prerequisite is that the headquarters of the liaison group or of any subsequent observer force should have adequate time for preparation prior to deployment, so that it can be operational from the outset. In the case of option (c), the deployment of the military observers would be incremental: a total of up to 200 observers would be deployed throughout the country, as security conditions permit. The tasks to be performed by the observers would include monitoring the ceasefire, monitoring the presence of foreign forces, monitoring and verifying the disarmament and demobilization process, and helping to build confidence among the armed groups.

78. Option (d), which involves the deployment of a robust peacekeeping operation, would be considered only in the event of a major change, either in the situation on the ground or in the commitment of the French or ECOWAS forces. The mission of

such an operation would be to create the security environment necessary for the full implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and to establish the conditions for lasting peace, including facilitating the restoration of government authority throughout the country and the observance of human rights. This operation would require capabilities and rules of engagement that would enable it to contribute to stabilizing the situation in the western part of the country. Preliminary estimates indicate that the size of a United Nations force to meet these requirements would be approximately 5,500 troops, including a slightly expanded headquarters and military observer group.

Civilian activities

79. Considering the high stakes involved in the elections to be held in 2005 and the sensitive nature of the issues that have to be addressed in preparation for the elections, particularly the questions relating to national identity and eligibility to run for the presidency, several stakeholders suggested to the assessment mission that the United Nations should organize and conduct those elections. I believe that the United Nations should be prepared to provide assistance for the electoral process to the fullest extent possible. Given the complexity of the issues involved, it would be my intention, if requested, to dispatch an electoral assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire, once the government of national reconciliation is fully in place, to consult with it on the role that the United Nations could play in support of the elections. In the meantime, it would be important to immediately set up a civil affairs component in the office of my Special Representative, consisting of specialists in the relevant areas, including a legal expert to advise the Special Representative and the Follow-Up Committee on the sensitive issues relating to national identity, and to monitor the activities of the national office responsible for the identification process, and one or two electoral experts to begin monitoring the electoral preparations, particularly the restructuring of the National Electoral Commission. In addition, considering the shortcomings of the judicial system, as well as the need to reform the national police force, it would also be necessary to assign a rule of law specialist and two civilian police advisers to the office of my Special Representative.

80. In view of the findings of the assessment mission, as well as those of the Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, concerning the humanitarian and human rights situation in the country, it is necessary to establish a human rights component and deploy child protection advisers, under the authority of my Special Representative. In addition, a protection adviser with expertise on issues relating to internally displaced persons would be deployed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to work with the human rights officers and child protection advisers to ensure the development of a common strategy for the protection of all categories of vulnerable civilians. Initially, those officers would be based in Abidjan and, subsequently, in key areas in the northern and western parts of the country, such as Bouaké, Duékoué, Korhogo and Man, security conditions permitting. The main tasks of these officers would include monitoring and reporting on the conditions of vulnerable populations, including children affected by the conflict and child soldiers, displaced persons and refugees, and assisting in building local capacity for human rights monitoring. WFP intends to deploy a civil-military coordinator to facilitate effective liaison and sound working relations between the humanitarian agencies and the military forces on the ground.

81. Currently, the United Nations has only a very limited ability within the country to monitor negative reporting by the media. An enhanced capacity to help identify trends towards xenophobia in the media, incitement to violence and other negative reporting would enable the United Nations system to work more closely with media and national regulatory structures in ensuring adherence to accepted standards. The media and the public at large might also benefit from an expanded United Nations capacity to provide credible information on its activities, both in support of the peace process and in other fields of endeavour. A communications and public information component, therefore, needs to be established in the office of my Special Representative. The functions of this component would include acting as a conduit for credible information on United Nations efforts to support the peace process and assist in the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, working with national media to improve conditions and encourage responsible reporting. Those officers would also work with the national media regulatory structures, in close cooperation with civil society and United Nations agencies, to further develop and strengthen those structures, and cooperate with United Nations agencies in ongoing efforts to establish close and fruitful relations with the media and provide accurate information on United Nations activities in Côte d'Ivoire.

82. The mission also considered that it would be useful to set up a small substantive secretariat to support the work of the Follow-Up Committee, as proposed by some stakeholders. It may be appropriate to strengthen the office of my Special Representative through the deployment of two or three political affairs officers for this purpose, in addition to those required to assist him in his political and coordination activities in support of the peace process.

83. For their part, the Bretton Woods institutions and UNDP informed the assessment mission that they intend to support the implementation of several vital aspects of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. The World Bank indicated that, as the implementation of the Agreement moves forward, it will be prepared to actively support the process in such areas as the demobilization and reintegration of disarmed combatants, the resettlement and reintegration of internally displaced persons, the reconstruction of communities affected by war, and the restoration of basic services for the people, such as schooling, health services and measures to fight HIV/AIDS, and, in close collaboration and partnership with IMF, the provision of budget support to Côte d'Ivoire, if needed.

84. In order to address the economic impact of the crisis at the subregional level, the World Bank also indicated its readiness to provide assistance to neighbouring countries aimed at helping to re-establish trade routes, support private sector entrepreneurs, restore expenditures on social services and poverty reduction programmes, and further strengthen regional integration and cooperation. In some cases, the Bank would consider additional budget support. I welcome these positive steps, which would contribute to the restoration of normalcy in Côte d'Ivoire and the affected neighbouring States.

85. UNDP intends to provide further support to the national reconciliation process in Côte d'Ivoire, the restoration of social cohesion and social and economic recovery. In this regard, the Programme will provide technical and financial support in the reintegration of former combatants into society following demobilization, the restoration of administration and local government structures, particularly in the northern and western parts of the country, the restoration of grass-roots communities

hosting internally displaced persons and those receiving returning internally displaced persons, and the fight against HIV/AIDS. In close cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, UNDP will also assist the Government of Côte d'Ivoire in the preparation of the national socio-economic recovery programme and in the mobilization of resources needed for its implementation.

86. Should the Security Council approve the proposals outlined above, there would be a need for enhanced and well-coordinated security arrangements to ensure the safety of United Nations personnel on the ground.

X. Financial aspects

87. Since early February I have authorized the deployment of several United Nations civilian personnel and the support equipment necessary to establish working premises in Abidjan for my Special Representative and to enable him to support the Ivorian peace process. These resources, for an initial period of two months, have been provided under the commitment authority granted to me by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/256 concerning unforeseen and extraordinary expenditures relating to the maintenance of peace and security. The foregoing recommendations concerning an enhanced United Nations role in supporting the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement will require additional resources for the deployment of military personnel and the necessary civilian staff, transport assets, communications and information management capabilities, as well as the setting up of suitable working accommodation in Abidjan and other areas. The financial implications of the proposed mission will be issued shortly as an addendum to the present report.

XI. Concluding observations

88. The Linas-Marcoussis Agreement offers the best chance for the Ivorian people to peacefully resolve the conflict that threatens to plunge their country into a crisis of the proportions of those that have devastated neighbouring Liberia and Sierra Leone. Regrettably, the disagreements over power-sharing arrangements have delayed the implementation of the Agreement and prolonged the suffering imposed on large numbers of the population of Côte d'Ivoire. The decisions taken at the meeting in Accra on 7 March are an encouraging sign of the willingness of the Ivorian parties to overcome these obstacles. Although the new government of national reconciliation has met twice, however, the Ministers nominated by the rebel movements have yet to take up their posts, in protest over such issues as their personal security and the responsibility for the fighting in the western part of the country. I urge the parties to overcome their differences, in order to allow the new government to start functioning without further delay and to address the bigger challenge of implementing the work programme set out in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. Priority must be given to providing security for the members of the new government.

89. I would like to commend the French and ECOWAS forces for the invaluable work they are carrying out under challenging and hazardous conditions. Their operations have been indispensable in preventing the escalation of the conflict. I am, however, seriously concerned about the logistical constraints facing the ECOWAS

force, which are expected to worsen with the envisaged increase in the size of the force unless donor countries provide the necessary material and financial support on an urgent basis. It would be unfortunate, if the troop contributors who came forward with offers to provide troops, on the basis of the promises made by donor countries, were to find themselves facing the same circumstances that compelled other ECOWAS troops to put an end to their operation in Sierra Leone early in 2000. In thanking those donor countries that have already done so, I would like to appeal to others to redeem their pledges or to join in by contributing to the success of the partnership between the French and ECOWAS forces. I also wish to appeal to donors to provide the necessary resources, including the equipment that ECOWAS will need to be able to assist in the protection of the members of the new government.

90. The regional dimensions of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire are extremely disturbing, particularly because they portend ominous trends for the wider West Africa subregion. In this context, the Ivorian crisis underlines the urgent need for the international community to pay more attention to the interlinkages of the conflicts in the region. In particular, the interaction between the conflict in Liberia and the developments in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone call for urgent steps to resolve the Liberian conflict, which is increasingly becoming the source of continuing instability in the wider region. My Special Representative for West Africa will examine, in consultation with other components of the United Nations system, the various aspects of the impact of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis on the subregion and explore ways of addressing them.

91. As indicated in my letter dated 7 February 2003 to the President of the Security Council (S/2003/168), I appointed Albert Tevoedjre as my Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire. Since his arrival in Abidjan on 11 February, he has convened several meetings of the Follow-Up Committee established to monitor the implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement. The Committee has been preoccupied with the efforts to break the stalemate on the formation of the new government. It has adopted its terms of reference, which include reporting to the Security Council all violations of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, and has also decided that the Force Commanders of the French and ECOWAS forces in Côte d'Ivoire will serve as military advisers to the Committee.

92. The interrelated tasks that will be performed by the various components of the United Nations system in Côte d'Ivoire need an integrated understanding of and a common approach to the crisis and its consequences. My Special Representative will devise, in consultation with the humanitarian and development agencies, an appropriate coordination mechanism that will ensure an enhanced effectiveness of the United Nations system's response within Côte d'Ivoire, and linkages with the regional dimensions. The existing humanitarian and development coordination mechanisms will have to be reviewed, with a view to forging a strong functional relationship between the political, humanitarian and development actors within the United Nations family.

93. Once fully established and functional, the government of national reconciliation must expeditiously define how it intends to implement the Marcoussis work programme and develop a timetable to that end. This would enable the United Nations and its international partners to determine the additional steps that may be needed to support the government's efforts in accomplishing the key tasks identified

in the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement, including the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the armed groups, as well as the preparations for the national elections of 2005 and the reconstruction of the country. In the meantime, I recommend that the Security Council approve the arrangements for United Nations support to the Ivorian peace process proposed in section IX of the present report and that a United Nations mission in Côte d'Ivoire, to be called MINUCI (Mission des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire) be established for this purpose. This mission would be headed by my Special Representative who will have overall authority for the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in Côte d'Ivoire.

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